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Message Text

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PAGE 01 TEL AV 06774 260942Z
ACTION NODS-00

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FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
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FOR THE SECRETARY, SAUNDERS AND ATHERTON FROM AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PBOR, PGOV, IS, US, XF
SUBJECT: ISRAELI CABINET PREPARES TO CONSIDER STATE OF PEACE NEGOTIATIONS

1. ISRAELI CABINET WILL TAKE UP PROBLEM OF STALLED NEGOTIATIONS AT ITS SESSION THIS SUNDAY, MAY 28, AMID CONSIDERABLE CONFUSION AND UNCERTAINTY IN POLITICAL CIRCLES. DAYAN'S PECULIAR DESCRIPTION TWO DAYS AGO IN THE KNESSET OF THE STATE OF PLAY, EXTENSIVE BACKGROUNDING OF THE PRESS HERE (SOME OF IT BY ME), INCREASINGLY BITTER ATTACKS ON WEIZMAN FROM WITHIN HIS OWN HERUT PARTY, A BITTER SPLIT WITHIN YADIN'S DMC, AND A GROWING SENSE IN ALL COALITION PARTIES THAT A SERIOUS MOMENT MAY BE AT HAND, ARE ALL INGREDIENTS IN THE STEW.

2. FROM LENGTHY PRIVATE CONVERSATIONS MAY 25 WITH SIMCHA EHRLICH AND EZER WEIZMAN, I AM CONFIDENT AT LEAST OF THE FOLLOWING: THERE WILL BE NO RPT NO ANSWER TO OUR QUESTIONS TO DAYAN DECIDED AT THIS SUNDAY'S
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CABINET MEETING. A SEEMINGLY FIRM DECISION HAS BEEN REACHED TO SPEND TWO CABINET MEETINGS ON THIS SUBJECT; MY EARLIER PREDICTION THEREFORE REMAINS CURRENT: WE WILL NOT HAVE ANSWERS ANY EARLIER THAN FOLLOWING THE CABINET MEETING ON JUNE 4.

3. I HAVE DONE SOME DISCREET BUT ENERGETIC LOBBYING

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WITH BOTH EHRLICH AND WEIZMAN TO MAKE SURE THEY UNDER-
STAND EXACTLY WHAT IS BEING ASKED AND WHAT IS NOT BEING
ASKED AT THIS STAGE, SINCE IT CANNOT BE ASSURED THAT
DAYAN PUTS THE QUESTIONS TO THE CABINET EXACTLY AS HE
HEARS THEM FROM US. (THIS HAS ALSO BEEN PURPOSE OF MY
PRESS BACKGROUNDING.) EHRLICH TOLD ME HE HAD TALKED IN
PRIVATE WITH BEGIN WEDNESDAY ABOUT THE NEGOTIATING
SITUATION. HE GAVE ME PRETTY SOLID ASSURANCES ON THE
BASIS OF HIS UNDERSTANDING OF BEGIN'S POSITION, AND OF
OURS, THAT "WE WILL NOT RECEIVE NEGATIVE ANSWERS TO OUR
QUESTIONS." HE ALSO MADE CLEAR THAT WE MAY NOT GET
POSITIVE ONES EITHER, BUT RATHER A REQUEST FOR
"MORE CLARIFICATIONS."

4. WEIZMAN CONTINUES TO BE GENERALLY DEPRESSED AND
FRUSTRATED, PARTICULARLY BECAUSE HIS LIKUD PARTY COLLEAGUES
HAVE BEEN RAKING HIM WITH HEAVY FIRE IN PARTY MEETINGS
OVER HIS "SOFT POSITION." NONETHELESS, I FEEL CONFIDENT
THAT WEIZMAN WILL SUPPORT GIVING US POSITIVE ANSWERS;
THE QUESTION IS HOW MUCH HE WILL ACTUALLY ARGUE IN THE
CABINET. EHRLICH DOES NOT LOOK ON THESE CABINET MEETINGS
AS CLIMACTIC. HE IS GENEROUS WITH HIS HINTS THAT WHEN
THE REAL "MOMENT OF TRUTH" ARRIVES ON WHICH THE QUESTION
OF PEACE OR NO PEACE WILL TURN, HIS PARTY WILL STAND UP
AND BE COUNTED ON THE RIGHT SIDE. (A. I AM UNCONVINCED,
AND B. THAT PARTICULAR MOMENT OF TRUTH IS CLEARLY NOT AT
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HAND IN ANY CASE.)

5. A GOOD DEAL OF THE CONFUSION OCCASIONED BY DAYAN'S
KNESSET SPEECH WEDNESDAY REFLECTS BOTH THE AGGRESSIVE
TACTICS HE EMPLOYS TO DEFEND HIMSELF AGAINST LABOR
PARTY ASSAULTS, AND ALSO UNDOUBTEDLY SOME MORE COMPLEX
TACTICAL GAME HE IS PLAYING VIS-A-VIS BEGIN. I AM NOT
CERTAIN IT IS WORTH MUCH MORE ANALYSIS, BUT WE WILL
KEEP OUR EARS CLOSE TO THE KEYHOLE.

6. MY STRONG RECOMMENDATION IS THAT WE SAY AS LITTLE
AS POSSIBLE IN WASHINGTON ABOUT THE PEACE PROCESS FOR
THE NEXT TEN DAYS AND PERMIT THE PROCESS OF FERMENTATION
HERE TO BUBBLE. ALMOST ANY PUBLIC STATEMENTS ARE LIKELY
TO BACKFIRE BETWEEN NOW AND THE TIME WE RECEIVE ANSWERS
TO OUR QUESTIONS. DECIDING UPON THE NEXT PHASE OF OUR
OWN GAME PLAN SHOULD AWAIT THOSE ANSWERS.
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